

Beneath the Surface

by Master of Pretentious Bull

Category: How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Angst, Horror

Language: English

Characters: Dagur, Hiccup, Stoick, Toothless

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2013-03-24 14:56:15

Updated: 2013-03-30 16:32:47

Packaged: 2016-04-26 14:44:56

Rating: M

Chapters: 3

Words: 18,828

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: After witnessing a murder at a young age, Hiccup is recruited into an organization that worked behind the scenes in order to keep the peace around the world. He would have to learn that to survive and remain safe, one must be willing to do things no one would. Trigger content: Non-con, dub-con, mental conditioning.

DARK!FIC. CHAPTER 3: NON-CON LEMON

1. Sharp

****A/N: ****Not beta-read. Sorry for the errors.

Warning: **Will contain adult content in the future. _Will be SLASH**_ and may contain lemons. This isn't a story of growing up with adventure. This will contain dark themes, possibly political conflict, and pretty morally ambiguous stuff. Hiccup won't grow up to be a bright, noble, and brave hero. He will be someone who works in the shadows and is not above manipulation of every kind.

* * *

><p>Beneath the Surface

I

Sharp

A boy barely eight years old remained as still as he can. A mouth with a few gaps of space where teeth should be bit down on dark sleeves, and green eyes were wide and red with tears. Leaves and twigs were stuck on auburn hair, and small cuts and scrapes littered pale-freckled skin. He was trying to stifle his short breaths and he hoped that the heart pounding a tattoo against his chest was only audible to him.

Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III kept still inside one of the many

underbrush in the forest as he waited for a man and a woman to leave the clearing. It didn't look like they planned on doing so any time soon either.

It was obvious the two were foreigners. Neither had the stature of a Viking, and they were shorter than the average European. They were both pale and their skins were clear and smooth, not even a freckle in sight of whatever bit of skin they exposed. Both had midnight-black hair, but the man's hair was chopped messily and the woman's hair was pulled tight in a high pony-tail. Their eyes were slanted and their brows arched sharply, both of their irises were dark. Even though they had somewhat similar appearances, Hiccup could see that they were not related. They both wore dark robes with a large belt that kept it snug against their bodies to show their slim figures, and their garb didn't even have a hint of metal or hidden armour. They only had clogs with leather thongs tied that separated the largest toe from the other four, with an elevated wooden base. That type of clothing was impractical in Berk's regions, but neither seemed to mind the cold and snow.

The pair spoke in a strange language, seeming to be composed of consonant-vowel collection of syllables which rolled out smoothly from their mouths. Maybe if the man wasn't cleaning a bloody wickedly sharp, thin, and curved blade while standing over another man dressed in similar garbs; Hiccup wouldn't be afraid to approach the two and ask for help to return to the village. It was still noon-time, and it was far too early for Stoick to be really worried about him since there were no dragon raids in the morning or any sort of danger from wild animals other than wild boars. Hiccup wouldn't test his luck to see if the foreigners would see him.

There was still the slightest bit of suspicion that the two knew he was there, but neither seemed inclined to do anything about his presence. As if they didn't view him as a threat, but Hiccup wouldn't mind if they keep thinking like that. Hiccup sucked a sharp breath when the woman bent down and stripped the corpse of its garments. Green eyes clenched shut as he heard a sharp tune whistle out and the sound of cawing birds descended into the clearing. Hiccup tried the best he can not to imagine what the birds of prey were probably doing to the body.

Hiccup had no idea how long he waited, but he managed to calm himself down enough to stop biting his clothes. He wasn't short of breath anymore, so he was rather confident that he managed to keep his silence. The sun now cast shadows at a different angle, so it may have been some time since he started calming down. His heart was still and Hiccup knew that he wouldn't really worry much about being found. However, he was rather nauseous when his gaze landed on whatever that was left of the pair's supposed comrade. He bit his tongue and steadily increased the pressure until he tasted blood just so not to make a single noise.

The pair showed no signs of leaving anytime soon, but it didn't look like they had any reasons to stay at all. Even if the man had his sword sheathed in a scabbard strapped on his back, that didn't mean he wasn't dangerous at all.

"It was such a shame Wind was traitor." Green eyes almost bulged out of sockets when the man switched to Norse. The time between each syllables of the man's words were equally paced; the language was a

little butchered from the man's accent, but Hiccup understood what he meant nevertheless. "A replacement required. We request Pierre from commander, but we need initiate to fill his place."

A strange sense of foreboding crept down Hiccup's spine, but he did not dare move an inch â€“ even if it seemed to him that the woman was looking at his direction with her head cocked to the side. He silently took a deep breath when the man turned to gaze at him as well.

"You are right. However, it must be someone young and impressionable, it is uneasy to deal with an initiate already entrenched in tradition, values, and loyalty to a single group that would turn a blind eye to their own tyranny. Also, it is difficult to teach someone whose body is no longer flexible as to learn the art of our Order."

"Perhaps this young child would be willing to join?" Hiccup froze.
"He shouldn't be afraid, we intend no harm."

They knew. They knew. Yet theyâ€‘ didn't want to hurt him? He saw themâ€‘ take out their companion, but they didn't intend toâ€‘ kill him? Hiccup's shoulders sagged with relief when the realization dawned on him, but he didn't want to go out of his hiding place just yet. Even though it was small and cramped, it would take a while before the two would reach him and he could scramble back and head back to the village.

"It is alright, come out little one, we don't wish to kill you. You have traits desirable to our Order, if we hadn't known of your presence earlier; we would not have known you were there." The two crossed their arms and kept passive expressions as they waited for him to show himself.

Hiccup bit his lip, unsure if he could trust these people. Though, he wondered how they knew he was there. He didn't make a sound when he saw the man stab the other, and he had been under the bush for some time since he heard the three (now two) pass by from another direction. His gaze darted around his surroundings and Hiccup almost groaned when he noticed that he left a trail to the underbrush. The boy sighed and he hesitantly crawled out of his hiding place.

Hiccup's gaze flickered between the pair and possible escape routes.

Now wasn't this embarrassing? If Stoick was there to see this, he would have shaken his head in disappointment. A Viking does not run and hide in the face of danger; he would fight until the bitter end in a bloody battle, but this sort of danger was different from what most Viking faced.

There was no exclamation of a battle cry, nor was there any sign of conflict. What the man did was quick, efficient, and far too impersonal to be considered a victory â€“ it was simply cold-blooded murder, a sudden blade to the man's chest and a quick swipe to the neck. It wasn't even brutal, but it sent chills down Hiccup's back worse than the ones he always had when the older Vikings slayed dragons. They were not the sort of people that did found glory in battles or would they fight fair, they were the kind of people that

did what they had to do and no one would know a thing about it.

Except maybe Hiccup.

The red-head swallowed and he kept a wary gaze at the foreigners who both observed him appraisingly. Hiccup stared back with a hint of distrust; most children his age would slowly let their guard down, considering the two held themselves similarly like experienced Vikings like their parents, but not Hiccup. Even if his mother mediated between him and his father (and to the rest of the village by extension), Hiccup had always felt like an outcast, and that it made him wary of other people besides his father and Gobber. Should both twitch a single muscle, Hiccup would be sure to run while alerting the whole village to the presence of two unknown visitors.

"So young, yet intelligent and observant, a precious and priceless trait our Order is looking for." Did the womanâ€œ just compliment him? That didn't mean Hiccup was going to trust them any time soon though. "You have the capacity to remain still for quite some time just as well, perhaps honing these talents are not something you are against? It would be such a waste that you follow the path of your peers who would have different talent to yours."

Nope, Hiccup wasn't convinced to trust them yet. "Uhâ€œ intruders are not allowed?"

The man smirked and then inserted a hand inside his robe and quickly pulled out a rectangular piece of wood with a drawing of a golden sun with a silver crescent moon with an eight-pointed-star on the centre inside. He threw it towards Hiccup, and Hiccup barely caught it with both hands. Hiccup remained aware of the foreigners' presence even as he turned the piece on its other side to inspect the token.

"If you wish to learn, return here tomorrow. It is preferable you are alone and no one would know where you would be." The woman turned and the man was quick to follow; even with their ridiculous footwear, neither made the slightest sound. Then the woman stopped walking when she was just on the edge of the trees and then glanced back at Hiccup with a passive expression. "I am Stone and this is River, we shall be back tomorrow."

* * *

><p>By all rights, Hiccup should have told Stoick about River and Stone, but he didn't. He really should have at least implied it when he woke up the night before to see the two rummaging around his home without even waking up his father without as much as a blink. Hiccup wondered how on earth those two managed to not even make the slightest bit of sound considering their ridiculous clogs.<p>

River turned to him with a smile that made him look eerie against the glow of the hearth of fire in their home. The dark-haired man placed a finger over his lips to hush Hiccup with a mischievous glint in his eyes.

At least a scream would have been a good and short way to alert the village of the presence of the two assassins, butâ€œ

Stone scaled the wall and made her way towards his bed in silence. "Here, this would fit just fine. Wear this tomorrow."

She took out a package covered with linen and tied with a thin string; she placed it over the foot of Hiccup's bed before tapping the wood of his bed's frame twice before ambling her way back to the window. "Tomorrow child."

He was awake for all night, but he wasn't tired or groggy for the whole day. The sense of unease wouldn't leave him even long after he found the clearing again with the package in hand. Hiccup took a deep breath and sat cross-legged on the ground, carefully pulling the string and then folded the linen open.

Inside were robes and clogs similar to what the two wore, and a thin and straight dagger. Hiccup inspected the robe and held it out above his head. Hiccup frowned, noticing that it would highlight his small frame should he wear it. He turned the garment over and pouted to himself, did he really have to do this?

Well, Hiccup knew he didn't have to follow through, but what kept him there was the fear of these people stabbing everyone in the village without anyone knowing. That and maybe he was somewhat curious just as well.

Hiccup rarely received compliments that did not come from his mother, and if ever he did receive one that didn't come from her, it was either he became suspicious or appreciated it. He never realized that the two would mix together in the face of strangers.

On one hand, even if Stone and River judged him, he was pleasantly surprised that it was full of approval. It was definitely a breath of fresh air compared to the elders in the village looking down on him for having a small and not-Viking like body like Snotlout. Those two definitely thought that all of him was just fine.

With a defeated sigh, Hiccup held the garment up and then began to undress. "Alright!"

TBC

2. Development

**A/N: **This is pre-movie verse. I don't have access to the books so I'm not confident enough in regards to this Camicazi character. Also, some bits of training sequence, another new character, and some awkward interactions between Stoick and the two. No beta so if you see any mistakes except for River's dialogue, please tell!

A few embellishments on Oriental history (Japan, China, and Korea included), Middle Eastern History as well (speaking of which, this is Assassin's Creed in timelineâ€| I think?). Story picks up around 1185, and this is around 1174 or 1175. This makes this the Heian period in Japan and the in-between years of the Second and Third Crusade then it's the Song Dynasty in China â€" banknotes, paper currency, and autopsy; though, even with a naval fleet, China's military wasn't very effective since the army was divided under four generals that go directly to the emperor but they have no unity. And gunpowder! It was in Song dynasty where gunpowder's use was first

recorded, so there will be explosions! Though, firearms weren't around in Europe until the 14th century, I'm going with a bit of embellishment here since Stone and River are Japanese, so they must have Chinese contacts and access to Chinese fire lance which was invented around mid-Song Dynasty.

Also, if Hiccup seems a little accepting of whatever ideals Stone (Ishi) and River (Kasui) would tell him, he's still a kid. An ostracized kid who gets either mocked or insulted by his peers and seniors in the only place he calls homeâ€| So yeah, he's accepting what he can from two people that, even if they criticized him at times, complimented him for the traits he had that's undesirable to Vikings. Also, Hiccup is still a kid. A kid loves fun too~

Beneath the Surface

Development

"Before we start, umâ€| I wan'na know who you are really and what is this 'Order' you're talking aboutâ€| It's umâ€| I really want to know." Hiccup tried not to shift uncomfortably while Stone tied the sash around his waist. His new clothes were a surprising fit and he wondered how the Hel did these two manage to prepare it in less than a day. "Well, I'm going to learn stuff from you and all, so I guess I need to, er, learn more other than I'm going to replace the other guy that youâ€| took care of."

"Asking the right questions, keep that trait. However, don't add unnecessary information or personal thoughts, such is unprofessional. Simply asking who we are and who work for suffices. Try again." Stone tightened the sash and stepped back.

Hiccup took a deep breath and thought of a good way to rephrase his sentence. "What do you do and who do you work for?" Then another question that plagues him since the night before came next. "And how did you end up in Berk?"

"Better, but you need to be more precise. The art of interrogation is subtle, but it is understandable for now. You are still young so you are not as verbose as I. That shall be part of your training as well." Stone grabbed the kit slung around her back and began rummaging. "To answer your questions we are assassins, spies, and anything and anyone we wish to be. We are scholars, inventors, philosophers, tacticians, and many more that work in the shadows. Our discoveries and capabilities are well-kept secrets, every member of the Order do not give their true names to remain anonymous should a traitor rise. We are the Order of the Night Walkers. On how we arrived in your village, we came through ships and docked on one of the locations in the island far from your village."

The redhead guessed that now was a good time to let his guard down, even by just a bit. Hiccup giggled a little at the name. "The name of your Order sounds cool, but not cool enough."

Stone scowled, but there was a playful glint in her eyes. "That is the closest words I managed in your language. However, choosing a grander name would call for attention. What use is a secret organization if it is easily discovered? We may as well paint targets in our foreheads."

River chuckled. "True, true. Not easy to stay under wraps, loose ends need cut. Stone, it is better he know and understand." He clicked his tongue. "A child will grow into man, do not forget that."

"Huh?" Hiccup understood theâ€| cutting loose ends kind of thinking, but these two couldn't be _that_ badâ€| Could they? "Know and understand what? That you, umâ€| kill traitors? I mean everyone and everywhere does thatâ€| "

Stone found what she was looking for and looked back at Hiccup with a dark smile. "There is no honour in dying due to treason; however there are things in the Order that go beyond culling traitors. You will have to be strong in heart to carry out these tasks efficiently."

The tone in the woman's voice spoke of finality, so Hiccup decided not to push the subject, _yet_. There was a next time.

"Alright!" Stone chirped loudly, almost making Hiccup jump back. "I am going to tie these bells around your ankles and I want you to walk without making a sound."

"You want me to what?"

"Walk without making these bells sound." There was a cheery grin on her face when she shuffled in front of Hiccup and knelt down to tie a pair of bells with strings around his ankles.

Hiccup could only gape at the Stone.

"We could be building your stamina, butâ€| we must maintain your figure. It is essential that you do not bulk." She tugged the strings for a couple of times and poked the bells, and then she dusted off Hiccup's trousers and then stepped away. "It is a simple enough exercise, however many struggle with mastering this for some time. This is one of the basic skills you must learn, and it will be incorporated with the other skills you will be taught later on. Also, we will be practicing at various terrains until not a single sound comes from the bells."

Hiccup nodded and took a step forward, both bells jingled at the motion. "Until I stop making sounds, right?"

Stone nodded and crossed her arms, keeping a close eye on the boy. She clicked her tongue and went over the child's posture. The assassin won't say anything yet and would let the boy figure out on his own what he was doing, but she will give her thoughts should the child ask. It wouldn't be good to spoon-feed the boy and it was a good learning exercise. The boy's name was a problem, but if the higher ups were the only ones that knew about the fact that their latest recruit was the heir of a tribe then everything would be fine.

Hiccup took a careful step forward, the bells tinkling a little from the movement. He huffed and took another step forward and cheered a little when the bell didn't make a sound until the heel of the clog made contact with the earth. "Until I stop making sounds, okayâ€|"

The redhead took another deep breath and continued the exercise,

trying out several other ways to walk just to keep the bells from jingling. For a child, he was very much focused on his task and if his mind was running a hundred thoughts per second, it was on several ways to get creative on this task. The sun was high, but the altitude of the clearing kept the air crisp and cool.

Hiccup expected this training session to be at least an hour; he was pretty surprised when Stone told him to stop after thirty minutes passed.

"The mind and body must be trained hand in hand. Since you are an initiate â€" "that escalated quickly, but Hiccup's lack of denial of the offer may have been the reason why he was instantly inducted into whatever organization this wasâ€" "we could not do those two at the same time, for now. Eventually, academic lessons would be given alongside your practical ones and missions would be given to you. There is pay, of course, and should you wish to master a certain art or science, we have scholars willing to teach. Should you show exemplary talent in other aspects of skills evaluated by officers, you may be commissioned for theseâ€| in time, of course. We will also condition you mentally in preparation of the things you will soon face."

"Oh! So umâ€| what do I get to know other than walking silently?" Hiccup sat down cross-legged in front of the two who knelt on the soft earth. River and Stone actually used a lot of big words, but he could take a guess on what they probably meant. "I mean, do I get to know how to kill dragons too?"

Stone and River shared a glance. "That isâ€| a matter we will discuss later on." Stone took a deep breath. "River would be in charge of your academic studies, I will simply observe."

Then Stone took a deep breath and closed her eyes, seemingly asleep.

River bought out a pair of thin wooden slabs, and a stack of blank and unbound parchment. There was another piece of paper with the Norse alphabet with an equivalent symbol to its side. "Having personal note better than books." He handed the items to Hiccup and then retrieved a charcoal pen and gave it to the boy next. "First we will learn basic of human body. You want your notes hidden. We don't wish for world to learn our level in science and technology until time is right. Use the code for now, I suggest hiding it then memorize and burn for sure. "

"Okayâ€| But why? Umâ€| Hiccup smiled nervously. "I mean, if you know all this awesome stuff, why don't you want to share it to everyone?"

River smiled, "it's too early. In future perhaps, but that is a subject matter not yet in your level. Later."

Hiccup huffed a breath and prepared his new materials, ready to list down anything important the older man would give. Then River's expression fell and he slapped his forehead, muttering in his own language.

"We do math first, I have no art for body practice."

Huh, maybe the two weren't that bad once past the murderers with an agenda thing.

* * *

><p>"Hiccup, come down 'ere." The boy in question shoved the box that contained his clothes and the dagger from the assassins' a little forcefully before running down the stairs of their home, almost running straight to his father.<p>

"Oh! Hey dad!" Hiccup smiled sheepishly when he looked up, expression faltering a little when his Stoick held an unreadable expression.
"Umâ€| is anything wrong?"

Stoick took a deep breath and laid a hand over the eight-year old boy's shoulder. "You were quiet for a few weeksâ€|" Hiccup tried not to shift, a little thankful that the breathing exercises he was taught kept him from giving away any hints that he was doing something other than trying to fit in. "I was worried that you don't seem to be getting along with the other children."

'_It's not that hard to understand why,' _was the wry thought. He didn't voice anything out even if he wanted to, but part of his training included not talking then talking at the right moments.

"Dragon training won't beâ€| The thing is, Hiccup, Gobber needs an extra handâ€" "

'_Of course he does, considering he only has one.'_

"â€"around the smithy, and I thought this is a good chance for you to strength and mass." Hiccup bit down on his tongue, knowing that even working in a smithy won't drastically increase his muscle mass. River covered him on that area with very detailed diagrams. That was actually the first thing he asked River when they started on that subject, if his muscles would increase if he put enough work and effort to developing them. However, considering the nature of their work, it was counter-productive.

"Ohâ€| when do I start?" Hiccup almost bit his tongue for trying to keep any extra words away, but ended up pausing mid-way because there was no need. This was his dad, no need for any professional speech. He had been in the clearing almost every day, making sure to dedicate a day or two to staying home at Berk just to not arouse suspicion.

"Tomorrow morning." Stoick was too cheerful, or had Hiccup had been used to River and Stone's stillness which made every other emotion seem extreme?

"Ahâ€| okay." Father and son shifted awkwardly. That was alright, Hiccup had been used to the tense atmosphere. They were silent for a few minutes before Hiccup broke it.

"So, I'll get going and try and see if, um, Fishlegs would want to play with me."

"Alright. I have duties around the village and another preparation for the raids."

When Stoick was gone, Hiccup couldn't help but feel that there was something tugging him farther and farther apart from the rest of his village. What if he wouldn't be a Viking?

The dreadful realization of that thought never seemed as terrifying as it once was before. There was a strange sense of finality to joining the Night Walkers, and maybe he will never be a Viking at all. That was a troubling thought, but he was already knee-deep in the Night Walker business that he might as well see through it until the end.

As he walked around the village, Hiccup tried applying walking without a sound. He had recently mastered this skill and Stone was already teaching him on the running silently part. He was surprised that once the ability to walk silently was mastered, it became second nature and Hiccup only had to worry about flexing the right muscles while keeping an eye on the ground and an ear to his surroundings. Still, it the ability to filter and calculate if anything or anyone nearby was beyond him, but Stone would get to that soon.

Hiccup mentally recited some of the terms and chemicals River taught him as he avoided (with great difficulty) older Vikings and some of his peers. He wasn't really keen on getting mocking or insults from Snotlout or the twins, so he made sure to stay away from where most kids gathered. It was true that he missed out on plenty of Elder Gothi's lessons, but no one would miss him. Which was very depressing, but Hiccup chose not to linger.

"Hey Hiccup!" The redhead winced at the sound of his cousin's voice. Escape or confrontation?

'Best in situation is hide or flee when discovered, but we fight occasionally. But keep quick and ensure victory.' River's butchered words came into mind.

"Hey Snotlout, anything I can do for you?" Hiccup straightened and tried imitating one of Stone's poses when she looked still but would suddenly change into a fast run. As much as Hiccup was confident in placing a bucket of water around his head and then walking around without spilling any but would make noises, he wasn't confident enough yet to do any of the graceful leaps his seniors performed.

Snotlout made a face. "You're going to work for Gobber and start making Viking weapons."

"That is like, a disaster waiting to happen." Tuffnut appeared from his periphery, Ruffnut trailing not too far behind.

"I don't envy him really." Wait, Fishlegs was here? Soâ€!

"Hmph, at least he gets to help our parents fight dragons." And then Astrid.

Processing their words, Hiccup grinned at hisâ€ friends? Play mates? Acquaintances? River's drills on expanding his vocabulary made picking a specific term for the children of other Vikings Hel. Without so much changing his facial expression, Hiccup replied cheerily. "Yeah, seems so."

To be honest with himself, the past few weeks were a little surreal. He eventually stopped trying to vie for any sort of attention from the village, and he was starting to get used to the idea. Then his dad told him that he would start helping Gobber in the smithy, which was indirectly helping in the dragon raids. It was cool, but it didn't seem to hold a spark. The thought of doing that neat trick of walking on water howeverâ€!

Hiccup bit his cheek when he realized that his age mates were talking and he was quiet as a mouse. Everyone didn't seem to be very focused on him on the moment, their attention were on Snotlout, so Hiccup was overcame with the curiosity to try one of the many tricks Stone taught him: sneaking away in plain sight.

It included walking silently and keeping a submissive pose, so it wasn't that hard to do. Without making a sound, Hiccup began to inch away from his rambunctious cousin. A grin threatened to split his face in half when no one seemed to notice, and he was glad that he kept his head down or someone would have noticed it. He managed a good ten meters away when his age mates realized that he was not interested in what Snotlout had to say about killing dragons with weapons ready to fall apart because Hiccup made it.

"Hey! How did you get there?" Snotlout shouted, marching towards him.

Astrid turned to Fishlegs with a confused glance. "Did you notice him walk there?"

Hiccup glanced back and a stroke of inspiration hit him. It was true that his age mates didn'tâ€! think of him much, so there was no harm in making a wild chicken chase now, was it? There was nothing harmless in using a few tricks and trades he learned, and it was a good training exercise! Maybe a little bit of payback once the realization that no one would be able to find Hiccup sets in and they would look a little bit like idiots was harmless fun, right?

With a mischievous grin, Hiccup broke into a run. Speaking of which, practice running in wooden clogs helped with his clumsiness, even by just a bit. Shouts of protests and for him to stop were right behind him, and heavy panting and laboured breathing came next. Stone's exercises? Very useful, just knowing how to breathe and position the body when running made plenty of differences.

Wind whipped Hiccup's hair as he ran up steps and zigzagged across the village, his cousin and age mates hot on his heels.

'_But not for long,'_ he thought excitedly. This was the most fun (without learning something new) he had in weeks! And it was glorious. Even if Astrid and the others were getting annoyed with his sudden change of antics, that was fine by Hiccup because this was fun and he needed to loosen up every now and then.

With eyes in front of him, Hiccup managed to twist and turn around objects, older Vikings, beams, and whatever obstacles with developing grace. His ankle almost twisted four or five times, but he would manage to shifts his balance to keep himself from falling. Snotlout and the others didn't have such luck (or balance) to do the same, they toppled over a few barrels and bumped into far too many Vikings.

Eventually, Hiccup reached the edge of the forest.

He glanced back to see that only Astrid was the only one left chasing him, but she looked ready to give up and let him go. Not wanting to lose this little game, Hiccup tried doing what Stone did when she wasn't 'meditating' while bored because it was River's turn to teach him â€“running up a tree and jumping to a branch.

Taking a deep breath, Hiccup picked up his pace and began running up a really large trunk. His feet almost found no purchase and slipping was easy, but Hiccup managed to push himself really high and jump towards the nearest branch. He heard Astrid's yell of surprise and grinned. Now his arms hurt.

Heaving, Hiccup pulled himself up and sat on the thick and fairly high (not really that high, but high enough to make sure that only an older Viking can reach him) branch. "Heya Astrid!"

The blonde girl huffed and blew some of her hair that messily covered half of her face; she stomped on her feet in frustration and began marching away. Hiccup laughed to himself, suddenly feeling breathless. His heart hammered in his chest and his legs ached a bit, but he had fun and this was very much worth it.

"Try not to give too much of our secrets away."

Hiccup yelped and almost fell on the ground, but he managed to hug the trunk and held on for his dear life. "Stone?"

The woman gave him a stern glance, sitting on the same branch next to him. "You are still an initiate and part of the Order, it is best not to let anyone know of our capabilities. Even the smallest bit of leaked information can prove to be fatal. Secrecy is important to this Order, and it is best to have the world second-guessing what we could and couldn't do. I suggest toning down any tricks you learned."

Her voice was hard and cold, but the words flowed out of her mouth with a crisp note. It felt a lot like disappointing his dad, except this was different. With Stoick, Hiccup only had to worry about getting into trouble and then making a mess for showing off. With Stone, he got into trouble for showing off and not making a mess of it. Gods, contradictionsâ€|

The older woman's expression softened and then sighed. "It's a matter of necessity, if ever we are in a safer location, your performance would have been called as exemplary. However, you nearly lost your balance several times, but considering your lack of training in leaping between trees â€“it was very impressive."

Hiccup's crestfallen expression turned into a pleased reddening of his cheeks at the praise. "Thank you."

Stone chuckled. "No need for thanks, I only spoke of the truth."

* * *

><p>"Give me seven important locations of body." River's voice was loud in the clearing, the only other sound besides the assassin was Hiccup answering and dodging between blunt projectiles while Stone

threw them.<p>

"The headâ€œoomph! The chest, the pelvisâ€œ" Hiccup jumped low and then rolled to a stand. "The neck, the shoulder, the stomach andâ€œ" whoa!" Hiccup slid down on the earth and grabs the stone to throw it back towards another incoming projectile. "The legs!"

Stone finished throwing whatever she could get her hands on and motioned for Hiccup to stop. For the past two months, you have shown excellent progress. Perhaps a few incidents of showing your capabilities to your fellow villagers, but you have excellently diverted their attention away from your skills despite the difficulty to do so."

Hiccup chuckled sheepishly. "Yeahâ€œ! It wasn't easyâ€œ!" Though, it certainly made Hiccup feel lonely â€œif his interactions with his age mates were tolerant at most before, now he was almost completely ignored, like he was part of the backdrop. Interactions with his father remained strained and conversations with Gobber were one-sided, since Gobber did most of the talking while he remained quiet. He wasn't a skilled liar like his seniors, so he was afraid of blurting anything about his secret interactions with River and Stone.

"However, we are afraid that your continued absences may come into attention sooner or later. In a week's time, we would be officially 'arriving' in Berk as refugees from a far-away village in a country nearly on the brink of war."

"Oh." Wait, _what?_ "You're staying without hiding?"

River grinned. "Not hard for you to sneak, right?" Hiccup nodded. "So we stay in open as traders, and you no need sneak into forest to learn."

"Ohâ€œ! That's convenient, but what about weapons practice and stuff?"

"Weapons are an extension of your body, you will be learning hand-to-hand combat and it would be easy to incorporate weaponry. On another note, I would like to make a few things clear in regards to your appearance."

"Huh?"

"Once puberty hits, your body will undergo changes in growth. Judging by your father's stature and hair, there is the possibility that you may grow a beard â€œshave regularly; including your arms, legs, pits, and privates; even with just the growth of stubble should it happen. Also, any blemishes on your skin are undesirable, so I would be giving you a special cream tonic to keep it clear, smooth, and soft. We also have several tonics to keep your hair soft and clean, so I suggest using it every day. Don't forget to take a bath and cleanse day by day, and a cologne will keep your scent pleasing. And yes, everyone in the Order does that. It's important we keep a pleasing appearance if ever we are put into infiltration missions that involve seduction."

Hiccup was quiet for a few minutes before opening his mouth, a question asked incredulously. "Seduction?"

"Sometimes we work on front, but it is best to keep a facade to be successful. Order does lots of things to be sure of success."

The redhead processed their words for a few moments before nodding in understanding. "Oh."

There was a pregnant silence in the quiet clearing before Hiccup broke it with a slight cough.

"I sort of wanted to ask this! Is there a right reason to kill?" It just came into mind if Hiccup was honest to himself. Vikings killed, Stone and River killed, but he understood there was always a reason behind them. There were stories of foreigners killing everyone; children and women included, in other kingdoms "some of their reasoning seemed ridiculous, but not to them. "I mean, it's alright if it's in self-defense or the person is a traitor, but what if you killed the wrong person?"

River glanced at Stone, looking disinclined to answer. Stone was silent for a few minutes before giving a tentative answer. "There is no right or wrong, only the fact remains that you killed. We will be given a name and face and order to kill, whatever the reason, it won't matter once the deed is done. Was it right? Was it wrong? No matter how much you would think about it, it won't undo your actions."

The child bit his lip, thinking over his senior's words. His face was scrunched in concentration for a long moment. Then he took a deep breath and answered. "Alright, I'll keep that in mind."

* * *

><p>Stone and River disappeared a week before. Now, a strange ship stopped by Berk's approached from the distance and Stoick sent a ship with a dozen of men to make sure that these foreigners were not hostile.<p>

The ship was small and it had an open hull, and there were barrels and chests stacked neatly on its deck. The ropes that held the mast had braided paper tied around them. More rectangular papers with strange symbols were plastered on its hull and the beak. Its stern was straight and its sail was brightly colored with flowers.

Hiccup had to hold his grin, he could see Stone talking with one of the men his father sent. It was strange seeing her light and colorful clothing (pink with red, blue, and green designs of flowers and other plants), it almost made her skin look less pale than it really was. Her choice of attire was very regal and elegant looking, but whatever curves she had was finally hidden by the robe. Her dark hair was tied into twin braids, and some of her hair was chopped short, and now dark locks covered her forehead and framed her delicate face.

River was on the deck, steering the ship with a rudder. He was wearing a plain light green robe with a thinner sash, and there was a larger sword sheathed in leather on his waist. Next to River was a teenaged boy with dark brown hair and eyes, wearing similar attire but his robe was light blue in color. If there was anything all three had in common, they were all wearing thin slippers without socks to cover their feet.

The teen looked like he lived in Europe, with round eyes and a slightly pinkish-tint to his complexion compared to River and Stone's yellowish paleness. There was a bored expression on the teen's face, as far as Hiccup could see on his instrument. The teen's features wereâ€œ boyish? Hiccup supposed â€œ the teen had a sharp nose, smooth cheeks, a smooth jawline and chin, and his eyes were almond-shaped and half-lidded.

A crowd was forming around the docks, curious about the foreign newcomers. He could see Astrid and the others trying to get a closer look, but Hiccup was content watching from a higher ground with a spyglass. He was curious about the boy with his seniors, but there was time for that later. As for Stoick, the large man was at the wooden ramps while waiting for the ship to arrive.

A week ago, Hiccup was already good at running silently but he was still limited to the terrain in the clearing. They would be moving to the beach and to the glacial cliff later, until he mastered walking silently in those places just as well. After seven days of not seeing those two, Hiccup couldn't believe himself that he missed the passive assassins. They could be fun at times, and the sneaking game Stone would start in the middle of the night was substitute over the dragon-related fun the other kids from the village would have.

Right behind Stone's ship was the one Stoick sent out, with eleven out of dozen onboard. Hiccup decided that it was a good time to try and get a closer look.

"Alright, move out, move out! Give the visitors some space!" Gobber started ushering the crowd away. A few of the older Vikings set up a ramp for the occupants of the ship to use. Stoick stepped back as the three set foot on Berk's territory. Hiccup had to bite the insides of his cheek just not to smile at Stone and River.

"They're refugees from the conquests; they want a place to stay," the man onboard with Stone explained. "They have didn't want to stay in the Berserker tribe."

"It is an honor, to be allowed to stand on your ground." Hiccup blinked when Stone bowed respectfully towards his father. Strange, she didn't seem like the bowing type. "I am tailor, my husbandâ€œ" Hiccup almost snorted. "â€œis a farmer, and that is our adopted son â€œJames. My name is Ishi and my husband's name is Kasui, we had come a long way from a far-away land, and we wish to take a permanent refuge in your village."

"My, how formal." Gobber nudged Stoick who had a look of deep concentration on his face. Hiccup kept quiet, fiddling his clothes nervously, afraid that he'd blow his seniors' cover.

"Why Berk? Don't you know that dragons raid this village almost every night? It would be safer in Berserker land."

Hiccup wondered how his father and Gobber would react to River, since the slim man's fluency in Norse leave a lot to be desired. Stone seemed to be willing to cover for him though. "True, but dragons remind my husband and I of homeâ€œ It is the closest we have to connect with our land. Times are desperate, two kingdoms near our country are at war and we do not wish to be part of the inevitable

conflict that will affect our home."

"Well, if ye'r not that prone to fightin', then why choose Berk since we fight dragons fer a long time now."

Stone smiled serenely. "That is not a problem; we are all capable of defending ourselves should we need to. We also heard that these reptiles love stealing supplies, but we know a way to keep our stores hidden and we could share it with you."

There was a murmur among the villagers that slowly increased in volume. There were the fears that the three were outcast spies, or at least planning to kill everyone in their sleep. Now that was hilarious, even to Hiccup, since the two had been running around when they can when everyone was asleep. Voices rose and Stoick had to diffuse the situation.

"Silence!" A silent hush filled the docks, and Stoick let the silence settle in before speaking again. "Alright, we're going to give you a piece of land where you can till your soil and do your trade. In exchange, you have to share whatever method you know in keeping our food stores safe."

"Thank you so much for your kind appreciation." Stone bowed again and Gobber continued ushering the unneeded crowd so that the refugees can go on with moving their belongings into the village. That didn't stop Hiccup's age mates into trying to meet James though, but Fishlegs and Astrid didn't seem inclined to meet the teen. Stone then continued to discuss a few more important matters with Stoick while River started hauling their barrels along with other Vikings. They were all headed to the village.

"My name is Snotlout, and I'll be the future chief of Berk!" James looked bored.

"My name is Tuffnutâ€"

"â€and I'm Ruffnut." No reaction from James still. Brown eyes scanned them almost lazily, but Hiccup felt a shudder when James' gaze landed on him.

The teen sized him up before shrugging. He clicked his tongue while Snotlout and the twins chattered to his side. The teen didn't seem inclined to talk, but the three quieted when James suddenly spoke. "There are two doors, one would lead you to Valhalla. One guard stood for each door; you have to ask one guard only one question to lead you to Valhalla. A note: one always lies and the other always tells the truth, and your question must only be answerable by yes or no, what will you ask? Tell me why it would work out."

James' voice cracked a little, his voice fluctuating between deep and a little high-pitched. Still, that didn't stop Hiccup with giggling while he concentrated, thinking of an answer. It seemed fun and it was a good mental exercise.

They all made faces of varying concentration, the riddle caught Astrid and Fishleg's attention and now they seemed okay with joining in.

By the side, River chuckled. "James, that is hard question, don't

torture children."

Snotlout frowned at the older man and then blew a raspberry when River turned his back. No more than half a minute later, Hiccup's age mates started shouting various questions that served as answers to the riddle. The redhead remained silently as he mulled over the cryptic query.

James didn't seem satisfied with whatever they had to say. Three minutes later, they all seemed to have given up. Except for Astrid who wanted to conquer this challenge.

"Are you guarding the door to enlightenment?"

James smirked at her. "What if you asked the liar? If he says no, then you would be going to door that isn't to Valhalla." He turned to Hiccup. "What about you? What's your answer?"

Hiccup glanced to his side to see if River heard or if he would approve of him showing more intelligence than his age mates. The older man shrugged, so Hiccup took that as a yes. "Umâ€œ| Would the other guard say he's guarding the way to Valhalla?"

"Eh? How would that work out?" Snotlout scowled at him once he noticed James' approving expression.

Hiccup smiled a little then took a deep breath. "I mean, if you asked the liar then he'd say what the opposite the truthful guard would say. If you ask the truthful guard, then he'd say what the liar would say. If the guard answers no, then the door he's guarding is the way; if he says yes, then it's the other door."

"Huh?" was the collective intelligent reply. James clapped twice and ruffled Hiccup's head before moving back to the small ship to help river.

"That's the right answer, but I'm afraid I would have to help my old man here. We could have fun later."

"Lame!" The twins decided to call James before stomping off to do whatever they usually did with Snotlout. His cousin wasn't far behind the two, while Astrid huffed and pouted at Hiccup before following the three.

"Wow that was really smart Hiccup." Fishlegs didn't seem too quick to follow the other four. "How did you know to answer that?"

Hiccup shrugged. "It was a trick question."

The bulkier boy made an 'oh' shape before scrambling up to the village when his mother's voice echoed in the air. "See you next time Hiccup!"

James was carrying a large pile of boxes before settling them on the ramp. He turned to Hiccup with a cold gaze. The teen's voice was quiet enough for just the two of them to hear. "I suggest you learn another language besides this. Also, refer to our seniors as Ishi and Kasei when in the village. The three of us had risked a great deal for revealing our real names just so we could stand on equal footing. When we are training or in missions, refer to me as Glaze."

Hiccup shuddered at James (or should he consider the teen as Glaze?) piercing stare; he could only nod furiously in reply. "I promise."

James gave him a pointed stare before nodding back and then continuing to transport their items to where Stoick led (they weren't on official business, so Hiccup might as well refer to Stone as) 'Ishi'. Hiccup took that as a dismissal so he went on his way back to Gobber's smithy.

As he walked, he couldn't help but feel that there once something large and profound with James, but something ate it and it was getting smaller before it would start fading away. The glint in the older boy's eyes a moment ago was chilling, and there was a vast space that dulled those brown eyes. Hiccup could only hope that the same wouldn't happen to him.

* * *

><p>A week later, Hiccup was in the beach along with Glaze and River. Glaze was filling in for Stone's position as his physical instructor. His approach was definitely different from their female senior.</p>

"The holly tree poison to plenty animals, but effect takes while with humans. However, bark and leaves much more fatal to humans than berries." Hiccup nodded while Glaze was by his side, helping him balance when he felt like he would sink on the sand.

Glaze was almost right behind Hiccup, but he would switch in front of Hiccup to also give tips in stalking during broad daylight. The teen was quick to criticize, but he was also quick to give advice and praise if Hiccup did something right.

Though, his method of criticism was either offensive or funny. "Hiccup, keep walking like that and you'd make an ogre look like a ritual dancer."

"Hey, at least I don't look like a crawling troll!" Hiccup shot back. It took him a few good minutes to think up on a comeback, but whenever he gave a shot, Glaze already had something ready for him.

"So sorry for calling you an ogre, you don't have the height and weight for it. A wheat stalk is a better comparison." Glaze's voice was light and teasing, but his choice of words left Hiccup at a dilemma if that was good-natured or a hint of an insult was just beneath it if he listened well enough.

"Glaze, you distracting initiate, but carry on. Is hilarious." Hiccup pouted.

"Are you on his side or on my side?"

Glaze snorted. "He's on his own side; don't take another person's side except your own. No betrayals and no expectations. Don't be too eager for praise and attentionâ€"

"Weren't you praising me too a minute ago?"

"â€"your judge and critic are yourself."

"Hey! Then what the Hel are you doing then?"

"It only applies after your first mission, but for now, we are your judges." River laughed out loud at that.

Hiccup pouted at Glaze. "No fair."

"Keep dreaming kid; talk back to me when you turn thirteen." The brunet grinned broadly. "To be honest, you're pretty quick to learn, maybe that'll be sooner than you think."

Well, Glaze didn't seem too bad as long as his insults were ignored. Hiccup was about to reply when a strange expression flitted across the sixteen-year old teen's face. The child tilted his head to the side in curiosity, wondering why light aura around the brunet faded away.

"Glaze, are you okay?" There was genuine worry in Hiccup's voice when he saw something dark lurk behind the older boy's gaze. It was terrifying the longer Hiccup looked. The loss and the sense of something profound that went missing seemed to have become more pronounced in Glaze now, but it was quickly wiped away with a bright grin and a cheery laugh.

"I'm alright, nowâ€| River! Poisonous plants lecture, continue!"

Hiccup may know that all of his known seniors were excellent liars, but Glaze's words were far too quick and shaken to be truthful. Hiccup knew patience, so he'll keep quiet until the time was right to ask.

TBC

* * *

><p>Author's Notes: James is an expy of Jack Frost. Short, but hopefully somewhat accurate, definition: _an exported character deliberately based on another existing work or series, there are small changes but these are superficial because it's undeniable that the exported character was originally another character. Except the characters are not the same, but they are similar nevertheless._

Thanks for reading! Also, big thanks for DuckieLuver and her review!
:D

3. Void

WARNING: THIS CHAPTER CONTAINS NON-CONSENSUAL SEX BETWEEN A MAN AND A NEWLY-TURNED-THIRTEEN YEAR OLD, AND TRIGGER CONTENT. IF THAT SUBJECT MATTER DISTURBS YOU, STOP READING.

A/N:Not beta-read so sorry for the mistakesâ€|

Things get progressively darker from here on. If rape, genocide, and

torture aren't your cup of tea; please leave. Things go downhill from here, and there are things done that may count as brainwashing or moral degradation. This will feature desensitization. What will Hiccup be desensitized from? Experiences that would be considered as traumatic to a child soldier.

On another note, River's speech improved since he lived in a place using a language he hasn't perfected. It's a good time to practice, no?

Alsoâ€œ! This would be before the following: the Third Crusades where Vikings are running out; before the Kamakura period also known as the Shogunate, in the middle of the Song dynasty which established paper money and banknotes and the first permanent navy; also, around this time Korea was lacking an emperor so it was under the military lead of Choe Chung-heon. Civil wars in Korea, and Jin dynasty fighting with Song and â€œ"yeah, lots of shit happened in this period.

Some time skip, and it gets darker and edgier. On another noteâ€œ! I'M A MONSTER!

* * *

><p>Beneath the Surface

Void

Hiccup washed the soot and grime around his face and hands; he waved Gobber a goodbye before running off to the general direction to Ishi and Kasui's house. No food stores were out in the open, ever since Ishi had requested a piece of land dug deep enough and filled it with food stores for fermentation. Burying food wasn't unusual in Berk, but it was rare during the warmer months. It was effective in hiding stores though.

He can now openly carry the parchment that will soon turn into a codex that River gave him. It contained a few weapon designs, a few personal notes on experimental compounds, and a few snippets of his daily life in Berk. It had been four years ever since the foreigners' arrival and they seem to be adjusting well to the village, and they all managed to defend themselves from dragons pretty well.

Hiccup already had terrain training down along with scaling and leaping incorporated with stealth. They finally moved to hand-to-hand combat, weapons exercises, and projectile trainingâ€œwhich included bows and arrows, throwing knives, and poisoned darts. Stone and Glaze may have differences in their training, but his progress remained the same.

Then there were the times that their seniors would be pulled into bigger missions, and Glaze would be the only one left to teach him. Sometimes though, their lectures turn into different directions that would be far from anything resembling formal lessons. What Hiccup enjoyed though, were strategic lessons.

Hiccup was walking at a lazy pace, following the path back to the village. James was right next to him, hands inside the pockets of his trousers.

"How do you destroy a military kingdom with killing just one

person?"

"Umâ€| depends. What sort of army are we talking about here?" Intel also turned into an important aspect, and Hiccup appreciated people not charging headfirst into battles without proper information and a full-proof plan. There were also taught scenarios that these situations were scarce, but that was where tactical improvising came in. "What type of army is it? What's the chain of command, how many people are the higher ups, who are the higher ups, and which officer these people look up to?"

"Gah, why did River had to teach you how to ask questions?" James was grinning though. "Alright, here's the chain of command: there are four divisions, and each one has its own general. They answer to a minister of defence, the ruler of the kingdom, the prime minister, and to the heir of the throne. The elderly of the population prefer the prime minister over the ruler, the current generation are banking their hopes on the heir to the throne, and the next generation wants the prime minister to be replaced by the minister of defence."

Hiccup nodded when James paused. The older boy continued.

"One general has the largest army, but they are very disorganized. The other two generals' divisions are fiercely loyal, but these two are at odds, so the people under them are at odds too. As for the other generalâ€| they are the most effective, the best of the best, but they're small and they're more likely to stab one another in the back in a bid for moving up the ranks. If there's anyone who hold the most influence amongst the four, it's the defence minister."

"Okayâ€| bad army, easy to disrupt but the country isn't going down any time soonâ€| What about the economy? Who handles those stuffâ€| Wait! That is a trick question!" Hiccup frowned at the taller boy. "You can't topple a kingdom just by killing one person! You need to take down multiple key figures andâ€"" The redhead snapped his mouth shut, a contemplative expression on his face. "You could kill the minister of defence and take everyone else hostage."

Hiccup was getting good at gathering information too, but he has yet to learn how to pick up on certain key words and reading between the lines.

James laughed and ruffled Hiccup's hair. "Alright, explain."

"Next generation looks up to the guy, so take him out and the next generation wouldn't know what to do. You topple the defence too, and you get to shame the other important figures and bam, a ruined kingdom. This is theoretical, right? Because it's much more complicated than that. "

James simply hummed in reply. Neither felt like going back to the village soon, it was a little too early to rest. There was an appreciated silence between the two, further highlighted by the light breeze and rustling of leaves.

"So, how what brought you to the Order?" Hiccup asked out of the blue. "I sortaâ€| saw River and Stone take someone out and then they asked me to go back the next day to replace the guy. I saw no harm

there, so yeah."

James gave him a strange look and an annoyed expression flashed in the boy's face. "I was recruited, which was why I'm here and that's what you only need to know." He scowled and glanced away. "What made you stay in the Order?"

"Wellâ€| I thought; there was no harm in joining, right?" Hiccup didn't look up; his cheeks were a little red from embarrassment. "Well, I'm usually ignored and stuff so there wasn't any harm, right? It couldn't be thatâ€|"

Hand gripped his shoulder and Hiccup's back slammed hard on the tree. A shock of pain exploded from his back and into his arms, and the fingers digging on his shoulders. He could feel fingernails trying to pierce through the cloth and into his skin, and hot and laboured breath just above his head.

"_You had a choice!_" Glaze's face was contorted in anger. His eyes were bright with rage and his mouth was pulled back into a viscous snarl. "You could haveâ€| You didn't have to do this!"

Hiccup was paralyzed in fear, shock and bewilderment held him in place. This was the first time he had seen the older boy to be so angry. The usually dull brown eyes were feverishly bright with a madness that possessed him from an otherworldly force.

"No one will appreciate you, no one will ever be thankful for the things you will do for the good of others!" Glaze took a ragged breath. "You will desecrate the dead, violate the living, you will do atrocities and atrocities will be done against you until there's nothing left! You say that Stone and River believes that you have the strength to be a Night Walkerâ€|"

Glaze let the words sink in; Hiccup wanted the older boy to stop talking because it was confusing. Hiccup only knew that their seniors did a lot of horrible things, if it was for the good of the worldâ€| It wasn't that bad, right? Glaze must be exaggerating; the boy didn't seem to like him very much even if he proved himself to be intelligent and quick to learn. Though, Glaze was warming up to Hiccup, right? Why the sudden change? Was it something Hiccup said?

Hiccup's throat burned and his chest hurt. Tears prickled his eyes and made his vision blurry, and there was still pain echoing from his back when Glaze slammed him. Hiccup clenched his eyes shut, afraid that the older boy would hurt him in another way.

"They're lying.." A mirthless laugh escaped the brunet's lips. "They will tear away everything that makes you human until there's nothing left but an endless void. They'll break you, they'll destroy your spirit, they'll tear your heart out of your chest again and again and again. You'll be nothing more than an empty puppet that couldn't do anything for himself and you'll only good for following orders like a mindless animâ€|"

"Please stopâ€|" Hiccup's voice was a harsh whisper, and it seemed to drain the older boy of anger.

"Iâ€| Hiccupâ€|" The teen swallowed audibly, loosening his grip.

Hiccup dared a peek to see that the furious stance Glaze was now a defeated slump. "I'm sorryâ€| I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

The older teen pulled Hiccup into a tight and desperate embrace, chanting apologies into the younger boy's ear.

"I'll protect you, I promise."

A chill ran down Hiccup's back.

* * *

><p>Hiccup was surprised to find a ship waiting for them.</p>

It was his first mission and he was a few parts nervous, a few parts excited, and plenty of parts sick. Their objective was simple: poison a castle's food stores.

They were out in Berk in the middle of the night, and Hiccup had to wonder how the Hel they all would be back in the morning. There were no, thankfully, dragon raids tonight, so they were very much safe from prying eyes. On the other hand, the answer to Hiccup's question was answered in the form of a loomingâ€| ship.

It used sails, but there were enormous cloths tied on masts with blazing infernos stored inside stoves beneath them to make them float. The design was similar to the ship Stone bought, except it was larger and there were plenty of smoke coming off them.

Hiccup could only gape at the airship, he almost dropped his notebook. He had been sketching while waiting so he had it out, now that their ride was there, he hid his possession inside his kit. Since they were in the deeper and higher parts of the island, the ship won't be noticeable, that and the smoke made it look like a dark storm cloud from afar. Rope ladders fell from the edge of the ship and Glaze nudged Hiccup to start climbing up. The younger grabbed one of the ropes and heaved himself up, whoever was up there did half the work and pulled them all to the ship's deck.

"Whoa." This was the first time he had seen other operatives besides the three with him. They all wore thick clothes that covered their mouths and noses, tied with strings at the corners. There were also differently coloured armbands with numbers that denoted rank, and symbols that showed their specializations. There was a man with a hand on the steering oar, a few men scaling the masts to adjust the sails, and operatives exchanging scrolls and equipment.

An armband was handed over to Hiccup and he tied it around his left sleeve, noting that it was a garish yellow with a symbol that made him a tenth rank initiate with no specialty yet.

"Change his specialty to inventor." Hiccup's eyes widened and he started patting for the place in his robes where he stored his notebook. He scowled at Glaze who waved it cheerily then handed it over to someone with a higher rank. It was hard to make out the features of other people in total darkness.

The cloths were actually respirators to keep the smoke out of lungs, and one was handed to every newcomer.

"We will be dropped in a port in Brittany, we will be infiltrating the Château des ducs de Bretagne, and poison the inhabitants' food supply. The opposing Duke is favourable to the Order's goals, but there will be no assassinations. It's only a simple sabotage mission, an introduction for our new initiate." Hiccup nodded and tied the respirator around his face.

"Alright, so Glaze and I do a diversion while you and Riverâ€?"

"We carried several powders made from a compound of holly, mistletoe, and several other chemicals that will easily contaminate their stores. Nothing fatal, but it is a guarantee that their chambers might be in for a mess."

"Ew."

"It couldn't be that bad, there were missions worse than this." Glaze handed him a new band. "After your first solo-mission, you get your call name. I suggest doing something out of the norm to get a very unique one."

Hiccup sighed. "So my temporary call name is?"

"Whatever, we'll just wave for you without saying your name."

The mission wasn't very exciting, *per se*, but it was fun nevertheless. They were given cleats and the mission was over in less than an hour. They all managed to return to Berk some time before the sun rose.

* * *

><p>The blood between his fingers were turning into a dirty brown, drying and crusting on his skin; it felt a lot like syrup but smelled a lot like iron. The slick sensation of plunging his hand through soft flesh still made his nerves tingle with a strange static; like gutting a fish with his bare hands. He could still hear the squelching sound of a hand intruding a chest cavity ring in his ears; it reminded Hiccup of honey squeezed out a container and the snapping of stone. A horrible acrid stench came next, it smelt a lot like rotting meat, and it was very, veryâ€" <p>

"Riverâ€| Stop. Let's stop, pleaseâ€| I'm going to be sick." Then Hiccup was jostled back to reality, green eyes rapidly and blearily blinked away tears. Bile rose inside his throat, and the redhead turned to his side and grabbed the offered bucket from Glaze.

"We were almost done, but it was a considerable distance from your last mental imagery." River crossed his arms and waited for the ten-year old to finish purging whatever it was in his empty stomach.

'_In a state of meditation, there is this practice called mental-conditioning. Mental conditioning plus loosening unwanted reactions to it is called desensitization. The participant would picture a certain scenario with varying degrees of extremities of detail until the subject no longer shows any reaction to worse-case scenario situations. It's very necessary so that you wouldn't freeze in the middle of a mission._'

Hiccup started dry-heaving into the bucket. This went on for a few minutes, and then Hiccup started purging whatever fluids his digestive tract that could be puked out. After taking deep breaths, Hiccup finally managed to calm down. Glaze already had a mug of (thankfully clean) water for him.

The sixteen year old rubbed soothing circles behind Hiccup's back as the younger tried to catch his breath and calm his body; he was smiling without any hint of mirth. "I think that's enough for today River. Hiccup is strong, but he has limits too."

The older man remained quiet before nodding, standing up from his seat with a tired sigh. "We were making good progress, but I understand that despite our initiate's potential, he could not perfect this in eight sessions. We will continue tomorrow."

Hiccup could only nod in acknowledgement; he turned to Glaze and smiled gratefully, mouthing a silent 'thanks' to the brunet. Said brunet shook his head and helped him up from the elevated bed.

Ishi's house was strange in design. It had plenty of halls divided by partitioning and the layout could be changed by moving these pieces. The design made the cold air come in easier, but there were several hearths that kept a few rooms warm to sleep in. If looked from above, it was a lot like a large and wide wall, with a courtyard in the very middle.

"Stone has already prepared your tonics and you can pick them up by the fermented food stores." Glaze still held his hand when they left the room, pushing the paper door open and then shuffling out into the house's courtyard.

The air was chill and the pomegranate trees were all in bloom, it was already late at night so most of the people were asleep. Their only light came from the moon, but instinct made the two keep to the shadows. The two quietly made their way to the entrance, but Hiccup broke when they neared the threshold.

"Jamesâ€| did you go through that too?" Both knew what he was referring to.

"Iâ€| yeah â€" everyone does once ten. The first mental image given to me was drowning someone," James paused, letting his words sink in. "I don't know if you'll ever meet my old instructors â€" their call names were Moon and Galeâ€" and well, since operatives that got a name are taught how to train initiates so there wasn't much a difference except for personal choice of what experience they want you to picture. It wasâ€| it took me a while before I could actually watch a ship full of people drown and not blink."

Hiccup bit his lip, unsure on what to make of that. He couldn't help but feel that there was something wrong here, but he guessed that he was far too entrenched in whatever their seniors taught him so he couldn't exactly turn back now.

The redhead didn't want to head home yet, and James looked restless. "How were you initiated?"

That was a story the older boy had yet to share, and James usually

dodged the question whenever Hiccup asked. This time, the brunet seemed willing to tell his tale. "My family was from Wales, my father was a Knight Hospitaller but he died on a journey on the way home. As for my motherâ€œ! We were on a journey to Jerusalem but bandits attacked our caravan. Theyâ€œ! violated her, and they were about to turn to my sisterâ€œ""

"You have a sister?" Hiccup snapped his mouth shut when James gave him a withering glare. "Sorry, go on."

"Then the Dune Riders came. They're the Saracens operatives to keep peace in the Holy Lands. The Order took me and my sister in, and here I am."

A refreshing breeze blew, and the smell of pine and the chirping of crickets eased the ache in their bones and the wear in their veins. There was a quiet lull of connection between the two; their similarities lied in the very same organization that prepared them for horrors they were about to face â€“ about to commit. However it was more like an older brother leading his younger brother into a battle, teaching him the ropes and guiding him to have a better outcome.

"Hey, it's late. I'd better take you home."

Hiccup's teeth were clenched tightly as he scaled the stone wall in total darkness. His objective was clear: get in, steal the weapon plans, wait for Glaze, and then get out. River would be waiting in a boat that would lead them back to the Island Port before he would be escorted back to Berk in an airship. It was his first mission without River or Stone to supervise, and he would rather not fail this.

The initiate pulled himself up on a window ledge and checked to see if there were guards around. Thankfully, there was nothing that suggested the presence of one and the room he was observing was swathed in total darkness. He concentrated in the near total silence if there was any outside, and judging by the time between steps and the number of intervals: there were two patrolling the area. Hiccup sneaked inside the room, not making a single sound. He grabbed a flint stone and a small candle from his pack, crawling his way to a part of the room far from the door and window to keep his presence concealed. He took a map provided next and checked over the castle's plans.

The castle was five floors in total, around three hundred meters in length and five hundred in width. There were several rooms that were lidded with traps and Hiccup was glad he ended up in a clean one. His destination was a floor up and fifty meters away from the nearest stairwell. It wouldn't be hard to locate.

"Alright Hiccup, don't screw this one." He blew the candle and stored his items back in his pouch. He checked the window outside and peeked over the position of the clouds in sky. In the distance, he saw three puffs of smoke rise and knew that it was the signal for Glaze to start his diversion.

No longer a minute later, a guard sounded the alarms and metallic footsteps started clanking around the hall and into where Hiccup guessed Glaze started a fire. It was a controlled fire, but it won't be spread just yet.

There was still the fear of it spreading, but Glaze was a senior so Hiccup shouldn't worry much.

"Loki help me," he prayed quickly before pushing the door open, wincing when it groaned in protest. He opened it wide enough for him to slip through and then pushed the wood close. On another hand, even if most of the people from the organization he interacted with didn't believe in Gods, Goddesses, or even a single God, Hiccup won't be quick to forsake his own Gods yet.

There were beams on the ceiling, which was good. The ceilings were high enough and the space between the horizontal beams and the stone were large enough for him to stand. Even if there was no one to see him, it was best to remain careful and hidden. The initiate ran up the wall and reached for a beam, and now he hanged from one with both of his arms holding on to the wood. Swinging his body a little, Hiccup pulled himself up and perched on the wood in total silence.

"Here goes." He jumped towards the next beam without making a sound, testing his weight against the support. Satisfied that it would hold his weight, Hiccup switched to leaping towards each one in quick and successive motions. It took him a few minutes before he reached a window that was just a floor below his intended location. Hiccup's heart fluttered when he almost slipped down the smooth stone. He breathed out a sigh of relief through his respirator before grabbing on a ledge to scale the walls.

Looking up, he could see an orange glow reaching for the sky and smoke billowing to the opposite direction. There were the distant shouts of men and the crackling of fire, but judging by the diminishing heat, Hiccup's time was running out. Taking a deep breath, he began climbing up the weathering stone, kicking a pair of closed windows open to see a hastily abandoned room with a wooden table with piles of weapon plans at the very centre. Torches were mounted against the wall, bathing the stone room in a warm light.

"Steal the plans!" the redhead muttered, piling the sheets of parchment and then rolling them carefully. He hid each one inside his pack and then took a deep breath.

Hiccup glanced around before nodding to himself and stepped back on the ledge. He climbed out of the window and scaled up until he reached the walkways of the fortress. He looked down to see the majority of the castle's inhabitants were busy in trying to kill the fire. Strangely, it didn't seem to be growing nor dying. Hiccup scanned the courtyard until he managed to make out a lithe figure stealthily scaling up the walls.

'Must be Glaze!' Said operative finally made his way to the walkway. The older male didn't seem to be keen on moving anytime soon, but what he did next threw Hiccup completely off-guard.

The teen bought out three large packages from the sack tied securely around his back, and then set them on fire before throwing it back at the blazing inferno with sickly yellowish smoke coming from each. Instinctively, Hiccup sucked a breath.

'_He's going to kill themâ€_|'_ Strangely enough, there was a strange sense of detachment to that realization. Was it because of River during training? The younger teen knew that he should be sick, but he felt nothing at all. Except for a pang of guilt, but the fact that his partner was about to commit a mass murder didn't disturb Hiccup, and the lack of disturbance unnerved him. There was no honour to this, even if some Vikings pillaged and fought unfairly, they wouldn't blindly destroy a great number of people just to ensure victory. Maybe except against dragons, but killing every person was justâ€_| not done.

Sure there would be slaves, but what about the innocent ones? In one way, there were things worse than death, but shouldn't these people have a second chance?

'_Some things just must be done, and even if some are unwilling to do itâ€_| It is our duty to perform these things, because we are the only ones who have the strength and the will to do so._' River's words echoed ominously and Hiccup had to tear his gaze away from the blaze.

Soon enough, the barks of orders turned into pained screaming. The acrid stench of smoke was filtered through the respirator, and a morbid curiosity to train and know how much burning flesh reeked almost made Hiccup remove the protective cover.

"Let's go." Glaze's deep voice almost made him jump in surprise. The hood concealed Glaze's hair and kept a shadow around brown eyes, hiding whatever emotion he felt as of the moment.

Hiccup glanced back down to see most of the people trying to slam the fortress' enormous wooden gates open, but they wouldn't even budge. A cacophony of screams echoed in the air, desperate cries of help and retching sent a shiver down Hiccup's spine. Still, the guilt and disgust would not settle. There was something mesmerizing about watching people die from the smoke or fire, and it took Glaze a strong tug to have Hiccup tear his gaze away from the arson.

"Alright."

The two disappeared into the night.

* * *

><p>James had been tense for the last two weeks, he never let Hiccup out his sight nor did he let the younger alone with Stone and River. The two had been making subtle hints to his seduction lessons beginning once he turned thirteen, and whenever the two would make mention, James would shift closer to him with an air of protectiveness. Not only that, James would sometimes go out of his way to keep him out of Stone's strange house. On the times that Hiccup found himself in Stone's home, James was quick to accompany him when he wasn't inclined to leave.</p>

James won't say what was troubling him, but he seemed very adamant about Hiccup receiving seduction lessons. Hiccup knew what it meant, but judging by the older boy's actions whenever it came upâ€_|

Hiccup was terrified on what could happen. The older boy's uneasiness

rubbed off on him, and he couldn't help but be uneasy too when he'd meet their seniors' gaze. Whatever it was that troubled James whenever the older looked at Stone or River, Hiccup couldn't see it because he had yet to see the two truly let their guard down.

Then River began acting strange.

It wasn't noticeable at first, but when a few small things became frequent, it unnerved the soon-to-be thirteen year old boy. When Hiccup would have trouble with his calligraphy during their lessons, River would guide his hand to perfect the stroke while Hiccup's back was snuggled to his chest. There was the time when River took his measurements for a new robe, and the older man's hand lingered around his inner thigh. Sometimes, River's smile held a different emotion to it whenever they met eyes, and the way the older man would say his name set shivers running down Hiccup's back.

The boy really wanted to tell James about that, but it felt like he would be giving away a terrible secret. James was already worried for him as it was; Hiccup didn't want to burden the older boy any more. The teen was doing his best not to leave Hiccup's side, and Hiccup was thankful.

Three days before his thirteenth birthday, James and Ishi had to migrate to the mainland to receive supplies from Saracen traders. Now he only had River for company, besides Gobber and Stoick.

James and Ishi left in the middle of the night, so Hiccup had no idea until he turned up in Ishi's house.

"It was an emergency mission. The Dune Rider commander was discovered, and he needed a temporary refuge. They will return in a week," was River's explanation on the matter and didn't elaborate any further.

Then his thirteenth birthday came. River told him not to show up until night. When the sun was down, that was only when Hiccup returned to whatever lesson River had for him.

Hiccup fiddled his sleeves as River led him to the study where they usually conducted their lessons. Only a candle on a holder was their only light source, and Hiccup couldn't help but feel that the small light cast ominous shadows across the older man's face.

Right when they reached the hall that would lead them both to the study, River started leading him to a different direction. Hiccup's heart started beating erratically in his chest.

"Are we not having lessons?" Hiccup asked; brows furrowing as the older man led him deeper into the house.

River turned to him with a thin smile. "We are still having lessons; however the nature of this lesson is... fit for somewhere else."

Desperately, Hiccup wished that James was here with him. There were horrible implications surrounding River's intent, but Hiccup couldn't bear to walk away. An uneasy feeling welled from within him as they passed through screen doors until they were in the hall where the inhabitants' rooms were found.

"Riverâ€" "

"No need for formalities, call me Kasui here." There was a strange note to the older man's voice. Hiccup wanted to run, he was terrified but for some reason, his feet still followed his superior. Time was now an obscure concept to Hiccup as River led him to what felt like a maze of paper doors and halls.

"Whatâ€| What am I learning today?" Hiccup swallowed, a bitter lump stuck in his throat. He needed to run, and he was ready to run when he felt ice-cold hands grasp his arms. Hiccup's breath hitched when River slid the door to his room open with a bare foot. His heart pounded a tattoo against his ribs at the sound of wood sliding across wood.

"Don't worry Hiccup," a shudder ran down the boy's back. "Our lesson is a combination of physical and mental application, it will be painful, butâ€|I promise; I'll take good care of you."

"Riverâ€"Kasui, Iâ€| can I skip this? Can't James teach this to me?" Hiccup tried tugging his arm away from the taller male, but the grip around his hand was strong and painful. The redhead couldn't stop the whimper escaping his lips when River pulled him inside the room silently, throwing him towards the mattress on the floor with a dull thud.

Hiccup landed on the bed on his knees, he was quick to twist his position that he was facing River back and then he scrambled back to keep the distance between him and the older man. The sound of his back hitting the wooden wall almost made his heart stop in pure terror. River set the candle on a nearby table, and it felt like an eternity when the larger man turned to Hiccup.

"I'm going to teach you what to do so that it would be better, alright?"

Hiccup shook his head, his eyes wide with tears forming around the edges. "Pleaseâ€| No. Don't."

River ignored him, opting to pull the sash off his waist and dropped it on the floor. Hiccup's back pressed further to the wall when the older assassin began sauntering towards him, slowly discarding his robe. River wore nothing underneath the plain garment, and Hiccup could only stare at the older man's very much red and very much lengthened manhood.

Hiccup let out a terrified sob when River knelt a few feet in front of him, an eternity seemed to have passed when River was oh so painfully near. Flight or fight took over, but flight won when River quickly snatched his wrists and held them above his head.

"I'm going to do a few things just for you Hiccup, alright? And you're going to enjoy it, and maybe we'll start enjoying these things together." Hiccup shook his head furiously, biting his lips hard just not to whimper in fear. With his other hand, River wiped the tears trailing down Hiccup's cheeks. "Don't cry, don't cryâ€| Everything's going to be alright."

Hiccup cried out when a pair of cold lips met his, and River took that as his chance to slide his tongue in and began exploring the insides of Hiccup's mouth. His cries were muffled by River's mouth, and the hand around his wrists tightened hard enough that Hiccup felt like his bones might break.

And it burned.

The older man's skin was so cold that it set a shameful fire pool in the pit of Hiccup's stomach, and his skin was feverishly hot compared to River's. Another hand slipped inside his shirt and then caressed over the flat pane of his stomach, tracing over the skin kept smooth artificially until it reached one of the boy's nipples and began rubbing it teasingly. Burning horror and disgust filled Hiccup when pleasure ran down his spine at the contact, and his revulsion increased when he felt himself finally respond to River's kiss and his back arch to close the gap between their bodies. When River pulled away, embarrassment coloured Hiccup's cheeks when a needy sigh escaped his lips. Hiccup's breaths were short and air didn't seem to fill up his lungs fast enough.

'The body reacts in certain ways depending on stimuli, the body reacts in certain ways depending on stimuli, the body reacts in certain ways depending on stimuli,'' Hiccup chanted to himself mentally, desperately believing that his body was only acting this way because of River's touch, not because he wanted this.

'But what if you do like this?' The horrible thought wormed its way through his mental mantra, and bile rose in Hiccup's throat.

"See? You're getting the hang of thisâ€| I'm going to make you feel better, alright?" River lifted his shirt with the hand playing with his nipples and then pulled it over Hiccup's head, but the older male didn't remove it completely. Instead, River made a makeshift bind with his tunic so that his arms remained immobile and numb behind his back. Hiccup could taste blood, his teeth biting hard on his lips just to muffle his desperate cries. "Shh, this will be over soon."

"Please, stopâ€| I'd do anything, just stop. Please!"

River placed a quick kiss over his forehead, and then a tongue licked Hiccup's left lobe and teeth began nipping the soft skin teasingly. Both of River's thumbs continued caressing his nipples, rubbing and then pinching the sensitive flesh which elicited pleasured moans from Hiccup's lips that left the boy lightheaded. River smirked in his neck and then moved to kissing soft, pink lips that belonged to a child at least twenty years younger than him. Hiccup's moans and breathy gasps were swallowed by lips larger than his own, stealing his breath and something deeper away. When River pulled away, Hiccup was gasping for sweet, sweet air. Sweat covered almost every inch of his body, and his hair stuck to his face in thick and damp clumps.

Hiccup froze when he felt River's hands began to trail lower on his body, caressing and memorizing every inch of skin the cold fingers touched. River paused when he now held Hiccup by his waist, the boy felt like his limbs were made out stone and he wanted to struggle against the unwelcome touch. River licked his lips and began pulling down the boy's trousers tantalizingly; Hiccup managed to regain

control of his muscles and he started squirming in vain hopes to deter the man in his endeavours. If there was something his movement did, it seemed to have made River more excited. A shudder ran down Hiccup's back and the cold seemed to have stirred his loins into waking, much to his repulse. Hiccup clenched his eyes shut, unable to bear this burning humiliation, even if he could barely think in his situation.

"Hiccup, hey." Fingers clenched his hair, and Hiccup gasped in shock and pain. "Look at me Hiccup, this is important. You need to learn how to give others pleasure and how to pleasure yourself in the throes of passion with another."

Hiccup shook his head; a fresh wave of tears fell from his eyes. He gasped again after a much more painful tug from River.

"Open your eyes Hiccup," the man hissed. Not wanting to anger his instructor or father or teacher or senior or murderer again, Hiccup quickly complied. "Good boy."

Hiccup trembled when River caressed his cheeks once more, then River's hands moved over his mouth and finger pressed over his lips. "Lick them. Don't suck, I have lubrication, but I will prepare you first for the worst before we move on to something lighter."

The redhead opened his mouth tentatively, and he almost gagged when a slender digit intruded on his bruised mouth. He sucked in a breath and then swirled his tongue over the finger, coating the digit with saliva. River moaned, his other hand held Hiccup's leg in a bruising grip. Hiccup wanted to throw his head back, but there was now two fingers in his mouth. His cries were muffled as he continued to lick River's digits, disgust and revulsion burning him to the very core.

Then River pulled his fingers out, and Hiccup felt shame when he tried reaching for the digits with a wanton moan. Hiccup was panting and there was a deep exhaustion settling in his bones, and he wanted nothing more than to stop...

He gasped in shock and pleasure when he felt the soft pad of River's forefinger trace his cock, a jolt of pleasure run down his spine from the contact and his hips grinded forward, desperate for contact. Now a hand gripped Hiccup's hardening dick, stroking the growing erection slowly at first and then it began increasing in pace. Hiccup mewled, mind in a haze of pleasure and ecstasy. His pupils were blown, and his green eyes were dark with lust and pleasure.

Hiccup came, and shame and self-revulsion flooded the boy. He glanced away, unable to look at the man who filled him with such disgusting yet pleasurable feelings.

"There, thereâ€¦ We're almost done." Then River began to shift, Hiccup panicked. The boy shouted when his legs were positioned around River's waist, and now a hand was rubbing the cheeks of his exposed ass.

"Kasui! Please! Stop! I learned already! Please! No more! No more!" Hiccup cried out, struggling uselessly against his binds. River kissed his forehead to soothe him, but it was useless.

The same cold hands spread the cheeks to his ass and thenâ€"

"Ah! Ah! Aaaah!" Hiccup jerked forward, and River supported him with another hand until his head was nuzzled into a pale and slender neck. River began murmuring sweet nothings to his ear as his damp fingers began stretched his entrance. Hiccup could no longer muster the strength to cry out or sob, his mind trying to shut itself down just to save him from the inevitable violation.

Red hair was splayed over creamy skin, tapered fingers ran down his back and then another finger entered his puckered hole. The digits went in deeper, all the way up to the knuckle, Hiccup pressed to the older man closer by instinct. If he could curl into himself and block the world away, Hiccup would.

The fingers stretching his muscle open disappeared, and burning flesh pressed close to his ass. Then River pushed his erect cock in.

"You're so tight," River murmured to his ear.

Hiccup cried out at the intrusion, feeling something tear away in humiliation and violation. He started struggling to pull away, but strong hands kept his hips steady. Then he threw his head back with a scream when River's member pushed deeper. It was so hot, so painful, but there was a shock of pleasure flowing from the action. His breath hitched when he felt River's cock buried deep inside him, from tip to base. Then he felt River pulling out and a strange sense of reprieve flooded Hiccup, even if the shame and repulse burned him. A sigh of relief was about to escape his lips when it turned into a shout of pain and surprise.

River began to thrust into Hiccup, inside Hiccup. Each slap of flesh burned the child with revulsion, his humiliation and disgust grew as the man fucked him senseless. How could River do this to him? Hiccup trusted the man! Butâ€|

Hiccup's nails dug into his palms as River pounded into him, his green eyes were clenched shut as he tried to muffle his sobs. He was begging for anything, anyone to stop River. It hurt. It hurt so much.

A floodgate released and then there was pain and pleasure unlike any other. White blinded his vision as something hot and bright came over Hiccup in a burning flash. There was a hot and sticky mess inside, and the urge to scrub himself clean, to scrub himself raw burned.

River pulled out, and some of the man's seed followed the now limp member. A gaping emptiness gnawed on Hiccup, starting from the very place where the older man tore something vital and cherished away. Hiccup was tired, and he wanted to sleep. And he was cold, the need to be held close and simply feel that all ofâ€| this wasn't pointless and meaningless. Even with just River, the need to be comforted and protected welled up in Hiccup.

He didn't make a sound when his clothes were tugged off, his arms finally free. Both of his legs were adjusted and now Hiccup was lying on his back, nude and freezing.

Green eyes widened when he felt River moving away, leaving him alone.

"River?" He tried pushing himself up, even if self-disgust and hatred burned him for reaching out to the older man, Hiccup gave all his strength to shift into a sitting position. "Kasui? Whe-where are you going?"

Fresh tears blurred Hiccup's vision when he saw the older man picking up the discarded rope and sash and began to redress. Something raw and sorrowful caught Hiccup's throat, and the ravenous void grew. The best Hiccup could do was lie on his side as he watched River leave him, abandon him.

"Wait! Please! Don't!" His voice was grating against his own ears, and the hand reaching for the older man fell limply to his side. He felt the walls pressing in on him, the cold air bought no comfort, and his limbs were almost paralyzed. "Don't leave! Please, don't leave me alone!"

River made no indication he heard Hiccup's pleas. Without another word, he left the room. The door sliding shut echoed with finality and solitude.

All alone, Hiccup could only cry himself to sleep.

* * *

><p>Snotlout Jorgenson prided himself with a bit of observation. He does notice when Hiccup was being a screw-up again or when he was doing something that left a big mess. He wasn't the sharpest axe in the forge, but hey! He does know when something was wrong.<p>

Sometime around five years ago, Hiccup startedâ€| fading, to say the least. It wasn't that bad, really. Like Hiccup can become part of the back-drop whenever the scrawny kid wanted to be, and Hiccup was fast. The first time Hiccup managed to outrun them through sheer speed and grace was surprising as Hel.

Though, seeing Hiccup was starting to get rare these days, especially when those foreigners chose to live on Berk. Ishi was nice to everyone, and no one believed that she and her husband were thirty-five and thirty-nine. Seriously, no one had skin that clear, flawless, and without wrinkles. They didn't even have freckles!

Then there was their kid, James. The older teen was weird, always staring and always judging! He didn't even look that strong, but he probably had some magic or Jotun powers or something. The guy managed to beat a larger Viking in hand-to-hand combat! With one blow! James was as thin as a twig, so it was definitely magic!

Then there was the staring creepily at Hiccup thing. Sure, Snotlout may tease his cousin a lot, but Hiccup was still family and he had to stick together with the redhead sometimes, right? Since it was already established that James was a creep for Hiccup, it was alright to say that he would get the willies when James would get touchy-feely with his cousin. Seriously, ew. Can't the guy get his hands to himself?

Though, it was funny when he sneaked off in the middle of the night to see James leaving with Ishi to a trip to the moorlands with an expression on his face that reminded Snotlout of someone who had his puppy kicked. Nothing much happened, maybe except Snotlout can breathe better when there wasn't a creep hanging off Hiccup's shoulder like a leech on bloody flesh. The first three days were fine, Hiccup still disappeared, and all was fine.

Until a week later.

The twins caught a cold, and Astrid was helping out with her parents with whatever they did. He didn't really want to hang out with Fishlegs, so all he was left with for today was tormenting Hiccup.

It turned into a game, finding Hiccup, over the years. The boy learned to hide well, and a good lot of the village appreciated the lack of endeavours for attention. It was a little^{â€œ} missed, since it bought out some noise every now and then. So from Hiccup the Useless, it turned to Hiccup the Sneaky. Then there was the Hiccup the Swift, or Hiccup the Silent. What's with all the 'S's though?

Today, however, Hiccup was easy to find.

And it looked like there were dark clouds gathering around the boy. Strange, Hiccup didn't look like he wanted to play hide-and-seek, but that was fine with Snotlout. He was looking for the redhead anyways.

"Hey Hiccup!" Hiccup was walking down the path to the docks, probably waiting for his creep boyfriend. Snotlout knew his cousin heard, but his cousin was ignoring him. No one ignores Snotlout Jorgenson! "Hey! Listen when I'm talking!"

Hiccup sighed exasperatedly and turned on his heel. There were dark marks around his eyes and his usually bright green eyes were^{â€œ} dull. Snotlout shook his head, the sky was grey, and so it must be the light or something.

"What do you want?" Whoa, did Hiccup catch the cold or something? If so, why the Hel was he out instead of resting?

"Hey man, you sound like you had nadder spikes in your throat." Hiccup gave him an annoyed glare. Huh, that was out of character too. "You sure you're okay? Aren't you supposed to be in bed or something?"

Something flashed in Hiccup's eyes, and the smaller boy turned on his heel and continued on his way to the docks.

"Whoa, if you like, die, then your dad would put my head on a pike because you're sick and you're not supposed to be out."

Hiccup sighed exasperatedly. "Leave me alone Snotlout."

Snotlout didn't like being told what to do, so he marched over to his cousin and overtook the skinnier teen. He scowled at the lanky redhead. "Hey look, I know I'm a better Viking than you, but I have a brain too. As much as I want to leave you alone so you could disappear and I would be named chief, your dad might end up blaming

me if you die, so scram and go home."

"Why do you even care?" Hiccup crossed his arms and kept a sceptical expression. Alright, not cool. Hiccup was that quiet weirdo that couldn't hurt a fly, but this kid? It felt like someone took Hiccup in the middle of the night and replaced him withâ€| whoever this was. The cold shoulder, and there was just something mocking behind green eyes that totally looked out of place when it came to Hiccup. Seriously, like, what the Hel?

Deciding to just end thisâ€| whatever this was, Snotlout rolled his eyes and moved to push Hiccup back to his house. The scrawny kid was probably weak so it won't be that hard taking him home, right?

There were only a few things that scared Snotlout, one of them included receiving the ire of his father on a few times. As a Viking, he shouldn't get scared easily, so he really shouldn't have almost pissed his pants on what Hiccup did next. 'Scared of Hiccup' shouldn't exist, because it was like saying dragons were cuddly, and there were just things that just didn't go together.

So, on the moment that Snotlout made contact with his cousin, Hiccupâ€| went berserk, and that was saying the least. Oh boy, Snotlout wondered if he was sick too, because Hiccup doesn't snarl. Period. And Hiccup wasn't supposed to know how to wrestle someone into a merciful position that with just a snap of the neck, you're dead. That and his cousin's expression would have a dragon flying home, because it just wasn't that natural to see so much rage in someone as scrawny and weird as Hiccup.

"_Don't touch me._" Snotlout had to wonder if Hiccup was part reptile at the moment because hissing like that was creepy as hell.

"Okay! Okay! You got me!" Snotlout managed to groan out, tapping the earth to signify his surrender. This was embarrassing; thankfully, there wasn't anyone much around the docks to see him in a very, very bewildering position. "You could let go of me now!"

A few shuffles later, Snotlout was free and Hiccup sneered at him before walking away. Once the scrawny boy was out of sight, Snotlout shifted into a sitting position, staring at the direction where his cousin disappeared.

"What the Hel was that?" he asked out loud.

Maybe he was sick and dreaming, he should head over to the village elder for medicine.

* * *

><p>James didn't bother with setting down the ramps; he jumped down on the docks and bolted for the village.<p>

Stupid River, stupid Stone, stupid Seduction lessonsâ€"he needed to get to Hiccup. He needed to see Hiccup, to make sure the younger was okay.

'Please, don't let me be too late.' James didn't bother greeting anyone who welcomed him, his mind and body focused to a single person: Hiccup.

He didn't think twice when he pushed the entrance to the Ishi home open and started pulling door after door in search of River. The man wasn't in home, but there was a note in his room that said that he was out in the sea fishing.

James felt like he was flying when he suddenly found himself heading over to the forge, and then he breathed a sigh of relief when he saw the door open and Hiccup working inside. Though, it was best to be sure.

A strange sense of dread fluttered in his heart as he walked closer to the building, his stomach churned with apprehension. James clenched his fists and bit the inside of his cheeks as he approached his junior. Hiccup's back was turned as he worked on a sword, but there was something strange about Hiccup's posture.

"Hiccup?" The younger paused in his activities then glanced towards him.

James' heart sunk, and horror and revulsion coloured his expression.

There were dark marks around green eyes, but what distressed James was apathy in those once bright eyes. He knew that look only too well; it was the first thing he would see whenever he looked in a mirror after all. Something vital and something important was torn away from the younger boy, now all that was left were shattered pieces and a broken child.

"Oh. You're back. Kasui is out fishing, so he won't be back until sundown. Any reason why aren't you helping Ishi with your belongings?" James felt sick.

Oh, how he wished that he didn't understand why Hiccup was so nonchalant. He couldn't even look at Hiccup in the eyes, he couldn't even bare face the younger boy right now.

"_I'll protect you, I promise._ Those words sounded so hollow in his ears now. Where was he when the person he had taken into his wing as someone to protect needed him the most? Somewhere in France and following order like an obedient dog.

He swallowed a choked sob and stepped inside the forge. He was trembling, and he knew that Hiccup would be averse to touch, but he understood and he was sorry and he wanted to let Hiccup know that he was there and he was sorry and he should have been there when Hiccup was violated and used and abandoned andâ€"

"James?" His heart stuck to his throat, Hiccup shouldn't sound so scared and so lonely. He was sorry, he was so sorry.

A hammer dropped to the floor and Hiccup was pulled into a pair of thin, but strong arms. There was desperation and understanding and a whole lot of other emotions in that embrace that made both reel from the suddenness and shock of it all.

James hoped to convey what he felt in that hug, he wanted to apologize to Hiccup for not being there, but he could only grieve for the loss of something profound.

Neither had no idea how long they stood in that position, trapped in an embrace that will serve to comfort them for now.

Because in the near future, things will go far worse.

TBC

* * *

><p>AN:**I am sooooo sorry Hiccup! D: I DIDN'T WANT TO DO THAT TO YOU BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT

At this point onâ€| I'm sure you want to kill River, so I'm setting up a poll in my profile to see how you want him to bite the dust.

End
file.